



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 June 2020

by M Chalk BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/D/20/3246007

The Cottage, Epping Long Green, Epping Upland, Epping CM16 6QN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Donna Ross against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref PL/EPF/2200/19, dated 9 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as "demolition of an existing extension, building of a new two storey extension and refurbishment of existing".
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for demolition of an existing extension, building of a new two storey extension and refurbishment of existing at The Cottage, Epping Long Green, Epping Upland, Epping, CM16 6QN in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PL/EPF/2200/19, dated 9 September 2019 subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 1811COT_1000, 1811COT_1010, 1811COT_1011, 1811COT_1100 Revision A, 1811COT_1101, 1811COT_1005, 1811COT_1210 Revision B, 1811COT_1240 Revision B, 1811COT_1340 Revision B, 1811COT_1220 Revision B, 1811COT_1230 Revision D, 1811COT_1102 Revision C, 1811COT_1012.

Procedural Matters

2. Both parties have referred to the emerging Epping Forest District Local Plan in submissions. From the evidence before me this has been submitted for initial examination, but I do not have any further information on the outcome. I can therefore only give limited weight to its policies, as it is not clear how close it is to adoption.
3. The Council referred to the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework in its first reason for refusal. I have taken this to be a reference to the up-to-date document, most recently revised in 2019. This is consistent with the reference to the 2019 document in the Council's second reason for refusal and references in the Council's delegated report. The appellant's submissions likewise refer to the 2019 document. I do not therefore consider that the interests of any party are prejudiced by my considering the 2019 document.

4. During my site visit I saw that work had commenced on the appeal proposal. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:

- Whether the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt; and,
- The effect of the development proposed on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development

6. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 145 of the Framework states that the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate where it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Policy GB2A of the Epping Forest District Local Plan July 2006 (the LP) states that planning permission will not be granted in the Green Belt for the extension of an existing dwelling unless it is a limited extension.
7. The proposed extension would result in a significant cumulative increase from the original floor area of the house. The Council and appellant differ in their suggested percentages for the increase, but I do not consider that a conclusion on this can be reached solely by mathematical calculation. As neither the Framework nor LP Policy GB2A provide a clear definition of what would be considered disproportionate or limited, it is therefore a matter of planning judgment.
8. It is a fundamental aim of the Green Belt to keep land permanently open, as detailed in Paragraph 133 of the Framework. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. It contains both a visual and spatial aspect.
9. The visible mass of the dwellinghouse would be increased by the extensions. However, as the appeal development involves the demolition of previous additions to the dwellinghouse, it would reduce the sprawl of the house within the appeal site, limiting the extent of built form relative to the plot size. In addition, the extension would mainly be subordinate additions to the existing house.
10. I saw during my site visit that views of the appeal property were restricted due to the relative isolation of the site and the mature trees and hedgerows to the boundaries. There are two neighbouring houses close to the site, but I consider that views into the appeal site from these houses would be limited by the established landscaping. The loss of openness from the development proposed would therefore be perceived only in the immediate vicinity of the building, and only from certain points within the site due to the siting of the extensions.
11. I therefore find that the appeal proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It would therefore accord with the requirements of LP Policy GB2A and the provisions of the Framework.

Character and Appearance

12. The house would be extended at ground and first-floor level to the east, with the ridgeline of the roof matching that over the existing house. The Council considers that the extended roof form would be inappropriate, unsympathetic and incongruous, and have referred to an earlier application for which planning permission was refused. However, I have not been provided with details of that application so have assessed the appeal proposal on its own merits.
13. The two-storey extension to the east would replace a single-storey extension that, from the submitted plans, had a staggered ridgeline. The extension proposed would not project as far from the existing house as the removed extension, and I consider that the matching ridge height would result in a more coherent form overall. While the extension would not be subordinate, it would be a continuation of the house that matches its width. I consider that a matching ridge height is in this case acceptable and not unsympathetic to the character of the property.
14. I therefore consider that the development proposed would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area. It therefore accords with the requirements of LP Policy DBE1. Amongst other criteria this policy requires that new buildings respect their setting in terms of scale, proportion, siting, massing, height, orientation, roof-line and detailing.

Other Matters

15. The Council has referred to Policy DBE3 of the LP in its second reason for refusal. However, this Policy addresses new development outside the Green Belt. I have therefore only considered LP Policy DBE1 in relation to this issue.

Conditions

16. I have had regard to the Council's suggested conditions. As works have already commenced on site, a condition requiring commencement within a certain period of time is not necessary. I have imposed a condition confirming the approved plans, for the sake of certainty. As the external materials of construction are detailed on the approved plans, a separate condition to address this is not required.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the appeal succeeds.

M Chalk

INSPECTOR